

1 We claim:

2 1. A video system comprising:

3 a screen for displaying visual information; and

4 said video system containing a set of templates, each template comprising a non-  
5 overlapping set of active regions of the screen.

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7 2. Video system of claim 1 wherein said active regions invoke links to a data source.

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9 3. Video system of claim 1 wherein said active regions initiate application software.

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11 4. Video system of claim 1 wherein said screen displays a cursor, said system further  
12 comprising a control device for manipulating the position of the cursor to thereby select  
13 one of the active regions.

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15 5. A video system comprising:

16 a screen for displaying visual information; and

17 a memory for storing information corresponding to a template, said template  
18 establishing a set of regions on the surface of said screen as active regions.

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20 6. System of claim 5 wherein said active regions are used for invoking links.

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22 7. System of claim 5 wherein said video system displays a first image, said first  
23 image being annotated such that a set of active areas are associated with said first image,

1 and wherein when said template is activated, the active areas associated with said first  
2 image located at said set of regions are masked.

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4 8. System of claim 5 wherein said video system displays a first image, said first  
5 image being annotated such that a set of active areas are associated with said first image,  
6 and wherein when said template is activated, active areas associated with said first image  
7 are all masked.

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9 9. System of claim 7 wherein said first image is a video image.

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11 10. System of claim 7 wherein said first image is a web page and said active areas  
12 associated with said first image comprise hyperlinks.

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14 11. System of claim 7 wherein said first image is a still image.

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16 12. System of claim 7 further comprising a memory for storing a second template,  
17 wherein said first template can be replaced with said second template.

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19 13. System of claim 12 wherein said second template replaces said first template for a  
20 predetermined amount of time.

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22 14. System of claim 12 wherein when said second template is activated, any active  
23 regions underneath the active regions of said second template are masked.

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2 15. System of claim 14 wherein said second template can be placed over said first  
3 template, whereby portions the active areas of said first template underlying the active  
4 areas of said second template are masked.

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6 16. System of claim 7 further comprising a control device for selectively making the  
7 active regions of the template visible or invisible, but wherein said active regions remain  
8 active when they are invisible.

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10 17. System of claim 5 wherein the template comprises a security feature for denying  
11 or permitting access to additional information, wherein said access is obtained by  
12 clicking on a predetermined sequence of the active regions of the template.

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14 18. System of claim 17 wherein said additional information comprises a web page.

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16 19. System of claim 17 wherein said additional information is a video program.

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18 20. System of claim 5 wherein said template and visual information are provided by  
19 the same source.

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21 21. System of claim 20 wherein said visual information is video information.

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1 22. System of claim 21 wherein the template and video information are provided by  
2 an antenna, a memory device, an optical fiber, a cable TV source or the internet.

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4 23. Method comprising:

5 displaying a first image on a display device, said display device being part of a  
6 display system; and

7 activating a first template over said first image, said first template comprising a  
8 set of active areas associated with links, whereby said links can be activated by selecting  
9 one of said active areas.

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11 24. Method of claim 23 further comprising the act of invoking one of said links, said  
12 act of invoking comprising moving a cursor to one of said active areas associated with  
13 said link.

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15 25. Method of claim 23 wherein said first image corresponds to a web page  
16 comprising hyperlinks, wherein when said template is established over said first image, at  
17 least some of said hyperlinks are underneath and masked by the active areas of said  
18 template.

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20 26. Method of claim 23 wherein said image is a video image annotated with active  
21 regions, and wherein when said template is established over said first image, at least  
22 some of said active regions are underneath and masked by the active areas of said  
23 template.

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27. Method of claim 23 further comprising activating a second template over said first template, the active regions of said second template extending over at least some of the active regions of the first template, whereby the portions of the active regions of the first template that are covered by said second template are rendered inactive.

28. Method of claim 23 further comprising entering data into the system, said data being entered by selecting the different active regions of said template.

29. Method of claim 23 further comprising entering a security password into the system, said password being entered by selecting different active regions of said template.

30. Method of claim 23 wherein said template and said image are provided by the same content provider.

31. Method of claim 30 wherein said template and said image are provided from a single signal source.

32. A method comprising the steps of providing a visual image and a template information to a display system, said template information comprising the location of active areas to established on a video display screen and links to be associated with said active areas.

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2 33. Method of claim 32 wherein said visual information is video information.

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4 34. Method of claim 32 wherein said providing of said visual image and said template  
5 comprises broadcasting said visual image and said template to a plurality of display  
6 systems.

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8 35. Method of claim 32 further comprising providing a plurality of templates to said  
9 display system.

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11 36. Method of claim 32 wherein said visual image and said template are provided  
12 from a memory device.

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14 37. Method of claim 36 wherein said memory device comprises an optical disk, a  
15 magneto-optic disk, a magnetic disk or magnetic tape.

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17 38. Method of claim 32 wherein at least one of said links is a link to a web page.

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19 39. Method of claim 32 wherein at least one of said links is a link to a memory  
20 location.

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22 40. Method of claim 32 wherein said display system is coupled to a telephone line  
23 and at least one of said links causes said display system to initiate a telephone call.